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AUTHOR Williamson, Ronald E.; Abel, Frederick J.
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ABSTRACT

Credential portfolios as a selection tool in the hiring of new teachers is not a new idea. Their importance has been stressed in the professional literature. For the purpose of this study, we developed a portfolio checklist of items to be included in the beginning teacher's professional portfolio. After a pilot study was conducted, 400 surveys were sent to hiring officials in all of the districts in south Georgia. Data were analyzed using the Tukey HSD test. The major conclusion drawn was that there is a significant difference in the way various groups of administrators view items in the professional portfolio, especially middle school principals. New teachers should tailor their portfolios to a particular group of hiring officials. Additional research is needed to determine why these administrators view portfolio items differently. (Author)

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The Professional Portfolio: Keys to a Successful Job Search for the Beginning Teacher

Ronald E. Williamson
Director of Student Teaching
Berry College
Mount Berry, GA 30149

Frederick J. Abel
Head, Department of Education & Psychology
Berry College
Mount Berry, GA 30149

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A paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association of Teacher Educators. St. Louis, Missouri, February 22, 1989

The purposes of this article are: (1) to review selected writings focusing on the importance of a credential portfolio as a tool in the employment of beginning teachers; (2) to present the portfolio checklist developed for use in this study; (3) to discuss the methods used in conducting this study; (4) to compare the perceived differences among school personnel in relation to portfolio components deemed helpful in employment decisions and (5) to discuss the implications of these differences among school personnel for first year teachers seeking initial employment in education.

The Importance of Credential Portfolios

The notion that credential portfolios are an important tool in obtaining a first year teaching assignment is certainly not new. Weinberger & Didham (1987) attribute the 97% employment rate of the College of Education and Allied Professions at Bowling Green State University, in part, to the credential portfolio required of its education majors.

Williams (1979) also stresses the portfolio concept as a way of convincing principals the candidate does possess those skills, attitudes, and knowledge necessary for effective teaching in today's schools. However, he adds a new dimension to the meaning of credential portfolios by promoting the use of audio cassettes, a slide narrative program, video tapes and a student teaching notebook in what he calls an audiovisual portfolio.

The importance of credential portfolios in the job search for beginning teachers has been established. The crucial questions that we must deal with involve the portfolios themselves. What, for example, are the components of an effective or adequate portfolio? Do administrators at various levels of schooling have differing perceptions of an effective and adequate portfolio? What components, for instance, would elementary or early childhood administrators view as informative in a credential portfolio for the beginning teacher? Would these components be of equal importance for the middle school or high school administrator with responsibility for hiring new faculty? Finally, if there are differences in the perceived importance of components included in a credential portfolio among administrators at different levels; are these differences significant?

Since a portfolio is useful to school personnel involved with hiring beginning teachers, it would be important to determine those components most helpful in this decision making process. Simply put, what exactly should one include in a beginning teacher employment portfolio?

The Portfolio Checklist

Weinberger & Didham (1987), in their work with student teachers, have developed a list of items they use in portfolios for elementary and secondary majors (Figure 1).

"The items with an * are required for everyone. The items with + are for elementary majors only. Other special items required for Art or Special Education majors will be noted after the item. Items not marked are optional" (p.7).

Williams (1979), also suggests that prospective teachers include a variety of items that will help the applicant convince hiring personnel they have the skills necessary for demonstrating competence as a teacher. His list of items, which he stresses is not exhaustive, is presented in Figure 2.

Taking the lead from Weinberger & Didham (1987) and Williams (1979), a Portfolio Checklist was also developed for this study. The first step was to create a list to test in the field. Initially, after a review of related literature and discussions with local school personnel, a list of items for the checklist was developed. Once completed, this checklist was sent to 25 schools and administrative offices in North Georgia. Respondents were asked to consider the items listed and make deletions or additions and any comments that would be helpful in the creation of a final checklist. The respondents were then asked to rank the items based on perceptions of usefulness in the interviewing and hiring of beginning teachers. Twenty-four of the 25 surveys were returned. An example of the final Portfolio Checklist used in this study is presented in Figure 3. It should be noted that the final

checklist also allows for distinctions to be made regarding the administrative position of the respondents and general district size.

Survey Administration

Having established the Beginning Teacher Portfolio Checklist, it was decided that the survey would be sent to the schools, district offices and special entities of 1988 Congressional Districts 1 and 2 in South Georgia. These districts included fifty different counties and resulted in an initial mailing of 400 surveys.

Examination of the Survey Data

Two hundred and forty-five surveys were returned by the respondents. The surveys were then sorted into four categories; "District Administration" "Elementary," "Middle School" and "High School." This grouping structure resulted in the elimination of 11 surveys. Five surveys were discarded because the categories were mixed (i.e. elementary and middle school). Six other surveys designated as "Junior High" were discarded because the return rate was so low in that category. A final total of 234 usable surveys were returned.

It was decided, for the purposes of this paper, that the surveys would be used to present a list of items considered important by those involved in hiring beginning

teachers. This task was achieved by computing "Grand Means" or averaging the means for the four categories stipulated earlier. This data is depicted in Figure 4. The data is then presented in comparative form for each category in Figure 5. Finally, using a one-way analysis of variance and the Tukey HSD test, it was determined that some of the discovered differences were indeed signficant. The items perceived as important by the different school personnel in which the results proved to be significant are presented in Figure 6. As illustrated in Figure 6, there are significant differences among some of the respondents regarding the "Formal Teaching Unit," "Video Tape of A Student Teaching Lesson," "A List of Classroom Management and Discipline Strategies Used During Student Teaching," "Individual Student Case Study" and "Listings of 'Other' Work Experiences."

The results of the Tukey HSD test show that a "Formal Teaching Unit," "Video Tape of A Student Teaching Lesson," "A List of Classroom Management and Discipline Strategies Used During Student Teaching" and an "Individual Case Study" were perceived as significantly more important by middle school principals and assistant principals in the hiring decisions of beginning teachers than by district, elementary or high school personnel. These differences of perceptions at the middle school level were all significant at the $P < .01$ level.

Another difference noted in the data, that district superintendents and adminisitrative personnel consider "Listings of 'Other' Work Experiences" to be of greater perceived importance in the hiring of beginning teachers than do elementary, middle school and high school principals and assistant principals, is significant at the P<.05 level.

Implications for Beginning Teachers

The related literature and findings of this survey seem to stress some final considerations for the beginning teacher. That first faculty assignment is not something that occurs miraculously upon the completion of student teaching. Signing that first teaching contract necessitates planning in the early stages of teacher training.

The fact that "Transcripts" received a high ranking stresses the importance of planning and diligence in relation to one's course of study and classwork. That "Field Experience Assignments" also received a high ranking further strengthens the contention that one's professional reputation begins early in teacher preparation. A well-rounded field experience program; with outcomes taken seriously by the pre-service teacher, seems to be perceived as a very important component of a beginning teacher's preparation.

Along with these considerations, it should also be evident that careful portfolio preparation is essential to a successful job search. Armed with information like the findings of this survey, the beginning teacher may want to tailor the portfolio to a specific audience. Realizing that different administrative personnel perceive items in a portfolio to have differing value may take much of the guesswork out of the preparation of this essential professional tool. Informed planning can make this step into the teaching profession deliberate.

Conclusions

This study was conducted to find out what school administrators look for in a portfolio when hiring new teachers. We have concluded, from the results of the data, that beginning teachers should tailor their portfolio to the specific level at which they wish to teach as administrators at different building levels and at the district office view items in the portfolio differently. The fact that these administrators view items differently leads us to ask why.

We conclude that there is a significant difference in the way various groups of administrators view items in the professional portfolio, especially middle school principals. Significant statistical differences suggest that additional research is needed to determine why these administrators view portfolio items differently.

Furthermore, since this research was specific to south Georgia, its findings are limited to this area. Additional research in Georgia and other sections of the United States is also planned.

Administrators reading this article should ponder their hiring practices and and determine if any of the findings here would help them screen candidates for teaching positions more adequately. An effective portfolio may increase the probability that they will hire the most qualified candidates for their students, communities and districts.

Items Required in Student Teacher Portfolios
Bowling Green State University

1. Table of Contents
2. Resume
3. State certification
* 4. Student teacher evaluation report and experience verification
5. Three letters of recommendation
* 6. Official transcripts of grades
* 7. BGSU Placement Services credential form
8. National Teacher Exam (individual results)
9. Handwritten evaluation of student teaching experience
10. A summary of pupils' evaluation of student teacher's performance
* 11. Unit outline (student taught)
* 12. Four different detailed lesson plans (student taught)
* 13. One week of block plans (student taught)
* 14. Sociogram
* 15. Student teacher made test and test item analysis
+ 16. Learning center
* 17. Pictures with labels
    a. Bulletin boards
    b. Student teacher and cooperating teacher
    c. School
    d. Pupils in large and small group interaction
    e. Field trips
    f. Special events
* 18. Audio tape of a brief lesson
19. Video tape of a lesson
20. Learning activity packet
21. Extra-curricular activities
22. Other honors or awards
23. Flander's interaction analysis or other professional instruments of behavior management
24. Any other experiences related to teaching skills
25. Case study of a pupil (optional Special Education)
26. 35 mm slides of Art majors art projects (Art)

Figure 1. (from: Weinberger & Didham p.6)

Student Teacher Audiovisual Portfolio

I. Student Teacher Notebook
   1. lesson plans
   2. unit plans
   3. autiobiography
   4. a philosophy of teaching
   5. copies of tests and examinations
   6. grade and roll book
   7. copies of evaluations of your teaching from the cooperating teacher and the college supervisor
   8. evaluations from your students and your self-evaluation

II. The Narative Slide Program
   1. highlight of skills, activities, projects
   2. instructional bulletin board
   3. field trip
   4. attendance at a parent teacher student conference
   5. attendance at a community activity
   6. involvement with an extra curricular activity

III. Audio Cassette Tape of Lessons Taught
   1. motivational strategies
   2. questioning strategies
   3. teaching strategies
   4. instructional aids and resources
   5. classroom management
   6. evaluation strategies

IV. Video Tape of Lessons Taught
   1. lesson plan included
   2. lesson topic
   3. date
   4. grade level
   5. instructional objectives
   6. content

Figure 2. (from: Williams, pp. 2-4)

Beginning Teacher Professional Portfolio

Please rank the following items according to their perceived usefulness in the interviewing and hiring of beginning teachers. Use the following scale when ranking:

1 Mandatory 2 Very Helpful 3 Helpful 4 Marginal 5 Not Needed

____ Resume

____ Formal Teaching Unit

____ Media Checklist (media used during student teaching)

____ Samples of Classroom Work (student work, pictures of learning centers pictures of bulletin boards, etc.)

____ Prior Field Experience Assignments (grade level, subject)

____ Field Experience Evaluation Summaries

____ Illustrations of Classroom Arrangements

____ Video Tape of A Student Teaching Lesson

____ A List of Classroom Management and Discipline Strategies Used During Student Teaching

____ Individual Student Case Study (introduction, the student, home and family life, neighborhood, school and school progress, summary, conclusions, recommendations)

____ Listing of Other Experiences with School Aged Children

____ Listings of "Other" Work Experiences

____ Placement File / Confidential

____ Placement File / Open

____ Transcripts

ADDITIONS / COMMENTS

Please check the characteristics listed below that best describe your current administrative position and district size.

____ District Superintendent
____ District Administration/Personnel
____ Elementary Principal/Assistant Principal
____ Middle School Principal/Assistant Principal
____ Junior High School Principal/Assistant Principal
____ High School Principal/Assistant Principal

District Size:

____ Rural
____ Urban

Figure 3.

Beginning Teacher Portfolio
Grand Means

ITEM RANKING

1 MANDATORY	2 VERY HELPFUL	3 HELPFUL	4 MARGINAL	5 NOT NEEDED

1.439	Resume
1.661	Transcripts
1.864	Field Experience Assignments
2.034	Field Experience Evaluation Summaries
2.203	Placement File Confidential
2.308	"Other" Work Experience
2.498	Other Experiences with Children
2.665	Placement File Open
2.752	List of Classroom Management and Discipline Strategies
3.104	Formal Teaching Unit
3.290	Video Taped Lesson
3.563	Sample of Student Classroom Work / Bulletin Board
3.572	Case Study
3.941	Media Checklist
4.027	Classroom Arrangement Illustration

Figure 4.

Beginning Teacher Professional Portfolio
Ranking by School Type

Please rank the following items according to their perceived usefulness in the interviewing and hiring of beginning teachers. Use the following scale when ranking:

1 Mandatory 2 Very Helpful 3 Helpful 4 Marginal 5 Not Needed

Admin.	Elem.	Middle S.	High S.	
1.588	1.453	1.357	1.357	Resume
3.314	3.286	2.536	3.279	** Formal Teaching Unit
4.147	3.797	3.704	4.116	Media Checklist
3.794	3.492	3.179	3.786	Samples of Classroom Work
1.829	1.828	1.821	1.976	Field Experience Assignments
2.057	2.048	1.893	2.140	Field Experience Evaluations
4.265	3.920	3.786	4.140	Classroom Arrangements
3.676	3.165	2.714	3.605	** Video Tape of Teaching
3.147	2.742	2.286	2.833	** Management/Discipline Strategies
4.088	3.568	3.179	3.452	** Student Case Study
2.273	2.433	2.571	2.714	Other Experiences with Children
1.971	2.492	2.464	2.302	* "Other" Work Experiences
2.000	2.442	2.346	2.024	Placement File / Confidential
2.581	2.632	2.885	2.564	Placement File / Open
1.424	1.841	1.750	1.628	Transcripts

** P <.01 * P <.05

Survey Respondent Totals	
District Administration	35
Elementary	128
Middle School	28
High School	43
	234

Figure 5. Significant scores (in boldface) were determined by Tukey HSD.

Summary Tables for One-Way Anovas
(** P <.01 * P <.05)

Treatment Variable = Formal Teaching Unit

Between:	SS= 14.0067186	DF= 3	MS= 4.66890621	F= 3.90112693	**
Within:	SS= 272.872592	DF= 228	MS= 1.19680961		
Total:	SS= 286.879311	DF= 231			

Treatment Variable = Video Tape of a Student Teaching Unit

Between:	SS= 20.4689426	DF= 3	MS= 6.82298088	F= 5.06785588	**
Within:	SS= 306.962091	DF= 228	MS= 1.34632496		
Total:	SS= 327.431034	DF= 231			

Treatment Variable = A List of Classroom Management and Discipline Strategies Used During Student Teaching

Between:	SS= 11.6566944	DF= 3	MS= 3.8855648	F= 4.02129201	**
Within:	SS= 220.304513	DF= 228	MS= .966247862		
Total:	SS= 231.961207	DF= 231			

Treatment Variable = Individual Student Case Study

Between:	SS= 13.9934645	DF= 3	MS= 4.66448816	F= 3.97663315	**
Within:	SS= 263.919199	DF= 225	MS= 1.17297422		
Total:	SS= 277.912664	DF= 228			

Treatment Variable = "Other" Work Experiences

Between:	SS= 7.87745476	DF= 3	MS= 2.62581825	F= 2.98600445	*
Within:	SS= 200.497545	DF= 228	MS= .879375198		
Total:	SS= 208.375	DF= 231			

Figure 6.

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